

## **Yazoo Backwater Reformulation -- The Rest of the Story**

Recent news articles and editorials have misrepresented the Yazoo Backwater Project. These reports completely miss the fact that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has reformulated the old project into a new recommendation that's based on today's best available science and engineering. The new project will protect lives and property from devastating flooding in the Yazoo Backwater area, while simultaneously improving the environment.

The project is more critical today than it was six decades ago because of the increased runoff that occurs across the Mississippi River drainage basin. While other flood control measures have improved the quality of life in surrounding areas, this project offers a significant measure of protection to the lower Yazoo area. Frequent flooding affects over 1,000 homes within the 100-year flood plain. In addition, 231,000 acres of agricultural lands are flooded on an average annual basis, disrupting the lives and livelihood of the citizens in the area with floods that last for months. Local citizens speak about the loss of homes, animals, crops, and timber as well as disruption of the basic social fabric of life when floodwaters invade their homes. The affected citizens feel that the Government has not lived up to its promise since project inception in 1941.

The Corps of Engineers has recommended a reformulated plan that will diminish flooding in over 400,000 acres and improve the lives of citizens. This plan includes:

- Federally purchased conservation easements and reforestation of 62,500 acres of agricultural land – 20% of the agricultural lands in the backwater area.
- Restoration of crucial fish spawning and rearing habitat.
- Raising water levels by almost 3 feet during low water seasons to benefit fish and wildlife.
- Restoration of habitat for threatened black bear and the endangered pondberry plant.
- Reduction of forest fragmentation, creating large, adjoining forests.
- Restoration of critical habitat for migratory birds

Nearly 40 percent of the cost of this project is devoted to conservation and reforestation. Overall, the project returns \$1.48 for every dollar invested – a very good investment. The Corps has worked with local government officials, citizens, and state and federal government representatives from this region in the development of the recommended plan, which provides for a balanced approach to economic viability and environmental sustainability for the Mississippi Delta.

Further information is available at:

[www.mvk.usace.army.mil/offices/pp/yazoobackwater/backwater.asp](http://www.mvk.usace.army.mil/offices/pp/yazoobackwater/backwater.asp)